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Wordeater #68

wordeater 68 staff

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In order to get a selection published in this issue, four of the above had to vote for acceptance. For the award winners, only John Stobart is responsible.

Manuscripts or cover designs for

wordeater 69

must be submitted to John Stobart in room C-1069 by :

OCTOBER 20, 1989

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AWARDS

PROSE:
$10.00 to Jerald Janes
5.00 to Bob Loewe
5.00 to Maria Mellinger
5.00 to Kim Vollmer

POETRY:
$10.00 to Elise Wylie Boucher
5.00 to Amy Jo Junkins
5.00 to Bob Loewe
5.00 to John Schmitz

COVERS:
$20.00 to Anna Danbury

NEXT DEADLINES:

October 20, 1989
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Kris Bullmer

ONCE UPON A TIME

You came home one day
and with love in your eyes
(yes, I saw it--though you'd deny it)
told me you wanted out.
Before long you were gone,
married to her.
Divorce is like death
except one never buries the corpse.

****

Bob Loewe

DRAGONS

I once dreamed of dragons
winging gracefully through the sky,
enough mass to carry off an elephant,
eating a herd of cattle for lunch,
not bothering to stop for petty nuisances
like minor knights or poor princesses.
The world's greatest knight
was just a fair fight
for a perfectly average dragon.
Dragons don't eat asparagus
or get their hair cut.
Dragons don't pay taxes
or work dead-end jobs.
They don't mow lawns
or get stuck in traffic jams.
If their steak isn't done enough,
they breathe on it.
I dreamed of dragons
when I was half my age.
Ten-year-olds have active imaginations.
Twenty-year-olds live in the real world.
Yet when I explore my imagination
I roll back a stone
exposing a cave mouth,
and I am accosted by a fury of dragons.

****

Maria Mellinger

DARKENING FEATHERS

Darkening feathers,
Blood filled B. B. holes...
(The bird's eyes didn't close
When it died...)
My little brother
Became a man today

****

Anna Danbury

TOXIC COW

"Hey diddle diddle,
the cat and the fiddle,
the cow jumped over the moon."

We all know now, that same old cow,
could outglow that same old moon.
'Cause he's sittin' all day grazin',
on all of that toxic hay.

Cows lookin' all bloated, just been demoted,
by that warning toting C. Everette Coop.
'Cause he's sittin', all day thinkin',
that none of us eats the right way.

And so he'll fight, til we all eat right.
Fish is leaner, veggies are greener.
But they're sittin', all day rottin',
and they don't make cancer go away.

He just can't see, fish don't swim free,
they're all bogged down by hospital waste.
So they're sittin', right on the bottom,
why do the fish have to pay?

He says quit smokin', we all keep chokin',
on black filth from the trucks' tall stacks.
And our house is sittin', right on radon,
So C. Everette, what's the warning for today?

****

Maria Mellinger

FRESH SWEET SMELL

Fresh sweet smell
Touch of wool on knitting needles
A soap opera crying in the background;
Memories of a mother
And a summer
That ended too soon.

****

Bob Loewe

A NOSE IS A NOSE

What is a nose?
A face decoration?
The front of an airplane?
A characteristic of cognac?
Or fine wines?

(continued)

A Nose is a Nose, continued

A small amount?
"Beat by a nose."
Cyrano,
You must have been miserable,
A giant undefined thing
Hung from your face.
Or did you care?
A nose by any other name
Would smell as sweet.

****

Elise Wylie Boucher

CURIO

She is spectacularly insulated
By her dreams

Heavy Brass Unicorns upon
Fragile Glass Shelves

Tended lovingly

she touches a horn and
Wishes herself away

To a seashore of storms
And passionate princes
Dying for love

What living man can match that?

****

Elise Wylie Boucher

DEJA VU

It caught me unaware
A haunting melody
Sad voice sang of
A broken heart's creation

(And I recalled your smile
As you tried to teach me to two-step

Silly, citified girl I was
Laughing as I stumbled along
Unable to match your country grace)

I stood alone--islanded
Staring at the stereo speaker
Not noticing the tears turning to ice
In the winter wind.

****

Judy Belfield

WITNESS

One evening's blue stomach
stabbed by night
bled black; the black spread
dark, sticky
oozing ever further
across the skin,
tight skin throbbing
as the heart slowed
every beat more violent
each more distanced from the last
till, finally, no more
and then a stillness undisturbed.
As it happened
we stood watching
amazed by the speed of death
our voices paralyzed, choked.
Shock froze our eyes open
the pupils forever imprinted
with the cold memory.
Years later
when we think of it--
if we are able
we hide the facts in metaphors
smile through a grimace
as a deep dull punch
is felt in the groin--
a neverending guilt
for the neverending silence.

****

Kim Vollmer

OVER AND AGAIN

hot on my back
covers at my throat
the blanket, electric
is sweating upon my sleep
t-shirt melting to my skin
I would toss if the air weren't
so heavy upon me
I roll up on my side
to move away from myself
yet I come closer
the dream becomes more visual
more bold.
a face
of a teacher
I know already who she is

(continued)

Over and Again, continued

I don't focus on her face
it's of no value
her words are the ticking
of the clock in the kitchen
so tiny growing louder as
the house falls asleep
over and again
"and what else?"
she is saying
she questions me
she wants more of an answer
than I am initially allowing
for her to understand
I tell her what I think she wants to hear
"and what else?"
so I make something up
"and what else?"
I begin listing the circumstances
I am to face in the near future
"and what else?"
I yell my fears at her
yet there is no volume
to my voice
I feel angry and exposed
but satisfied that she will be quiet
"and what else?"
her voice becomes mine
and I startled myself awake
in panic
I whisper an answer that hollow
and loud inside of my head
small lines of light
come through my window blinds
one next to another
over and again
out loud I repeat my answer
for myself
for God to understand me
"John"
I am cold sitting up
the fading dream holds all my heat
all of my energy
I force my answer
I make myself listen
"I miss John"
over and again.

****

Kim Vollmer

ALWAYS WITH MY FOOT IN THE DOOR

always with my foot in the door
putting a dent in my hand-me-down boot,
I long to turn, leave once more
I fear my feet to take root.

if I move from this place I'll forget where I was
or the bastards just might lock me out;
if I stand too long fear will take me because
I tend to cling to or run from whenever in doubt.

give me a moment, just one second more
my mind a clutter of oh-so-much wit
give me a brick to prop open the door
so I can figure out it it's worth all this shit.

****

Kim Vollmer

AFTERNOON TRIP TAKEN INTO CONSCIOUSNESS

I was in the attic of my dream when you called to me, hidden under comfort, holding a warm bear solid at my chest. Digging and digging through boxes marked Past and Tomorrow, I was trying to hold on to a lesson learned. I had to remind myself of pain. Pain I'd taken and dragged along behind me until it was weightless like memory string tied to bony, cramped fingers. In Tomorrow, I found a secret I was sure to forget upon waking, yet I carried it in hopes to hold myself in smiling's grace.

I was in the attic of my dream when you called to me, safe behind my bear, with a cool hand I held under my jaw extending to my neck as not to expose it or let the heat leave me. The attic is the steepest climb. It had taken me many nights of exhausted surrender to get there and I had to journey back down so far and so long a path to answer you when you called to me.

Through the house of opposites, where left is right and right seems wrong, to a door that opens out to the inside world--with no hinges, no frame, a door it was not--just my idea of a door that was locked and forbidden until I reached it and then it seemed never to exist at all.

On a path that neither goes forward nor back I walked though my legs were tight from running. I was sure that this calling was inside my dream yet I made a desperate run to an edge, any edge will do, of steep and saw you through a window--too high up to jump and break the spell--the spell wont' break--and I wouldn't come back at all except that this is where you are--and "dinner's on the table."

****

John Schmitz

VICTIM OF OVER-ANALYZATION

Odd
That an advertisement:
"Sadism and the Moral Argument For God's Existence"
And a note:
"I'm going to be good to my brother, Nathan"
Could find themselves in the same room-cleaning.
Fate, perhaps? Maybe leftover fate that willed
This strange rendezvous.
No thunder and lightning to announce their way,
Something much more subtle, sublime.
I know one day, Sheila, Nathan's sister, and sadism will die,
Along with our personal pictures of God--
"Calm down," says the doctor.
"I cannot be calm!"
(I will NOT be calm.)

****

Bob Loewe

FOOLISH THOUGHTS

Is a fool really a fool?
Court jesters were usually paunchy
While others starved.
People don't watch fools,
Don't know what they do.
Fools do what fools wish
And fools fool fools often.
Who's the real fool--
The fool
Or the fool who ignores him
And is fooled?
Who's more foolish?
Fools always ask,
"Was that really a fool
Or was I fooled?"
You'll often feel foolish.
Fools seldom do.

****

Kim Vollmer

SILENT, UPON MY CHEST

to eat of blood and fire
to pierce the softened stone
to live among the demons
once buried with a rose

to feel the thickening flame
to scorch and sweat upon the snow
to run wild, free from chains
once buried with a rose

to never feel sorrow
to never feel again
so now I close my eyes
the night's my only friend

for I am now a demon
the bricks will meet and close
silent, upon my chest
you shall find the rose.

****

Lynn Manypenny

PARANOIA

Writing Huh!
What about?
Of livestock?
Of a boatdock?
Writer's block???
Oh, I know
Woodstock
You know, that free-for-all, be
anyone, do anything,
What the _ _ _ _ attitude.
Noisy 60s music orgies, drugs
Losing it & using it
Woodstock
Free lovin'
Janis Joplin's voice
Screeching like fingernails on a
blackboard
Dog-N-Suds drive-ins
inhaling the wieners
Pounding of tom-toms
Blasting of eardrums
Drugged
Janis Joplins
Bob Dylans
Jimi Hendrix
The Who
CCR's
Wild guitars
Joan Baez
French fries
Fried minds
Wild times
High crimes
People losing it, cruising it.
Then it is Don McLain's
"American Pie"
Do you know what that song's
getting at?

****

Maria Mellinger

COUP D'ETAT OF THE MIND

Radical thoughts
Rebellious music
Revolutionary books
Sarcastic poetry

****

Jerald Janes

PRINGLE PHILOSOPHY

The tall can seemed to say
eat me.
Brains floating in Vodka
i reached out.
With a tug, the air rushed
in.
One pringle.
Two pringle.
The potato drug solicited
my obsession.
Traveling thru the can, I
approached bottom.
Fifty eight pringle.
Fifty nine pringle.
I am satisfied.
The remains spill out onto the
car seat.
A single chip anticipates
its consumption.
But I do not desire you, for
you have been shunned.
Your pringle contemporaries
crushed you.
Fatefully, you were born
different.
Your handicappppppppppringle remains
your form.
You did not fit in to the intended shape of each other
pringle.
Your individuality created
tension.
The weight of the others authored
your demise.
Have you been reading those books?

****

Bob Loewe

WHY I-AM?

Why is iamb
Pronounced i'amb'
Instead of i-amb'
And an' a-pes'tic
Measures tro-cha'-ic.
Trochee is a trochee--
Not troche unless ill.
Dactyllic should be
Dac'tyl-ic, not
Dac-tyl'ic.
Dak'tyl feet are trochaic;
Duk'tyl feet are webbed.
A foot is twelve inches,
A meter over forty.
Why I-am?
Perhaps trochee is onomatophonetic
And iamb is poetic.

****

Elise Wylie Boucher

THE TRUTH IS....

I can't promise you
Happy Ever After

But, if we try,

We can make
Enough Joy

To last through
Our inevitable wars.

****

Kim Vollmer

I SAID

I said
"I love you"
then there was this act
a pulling apart
a scream of a tearing away from
every single thing
is an isolated separateness--
did I say "I love you"?
I meant that I love the space
between us.

****

Maria Mellinger

I WOULD RATHER STARE

I would rather stare
Into the flame of a candle
Than study the troubles of man.
Fire takes me back,
Draws me into the spirit
Of cool caveman days,
When you and I could look at a moon
Never trespassed,
An ocean never sailed,
A world never proven spherical.
Fire is not analytical
Symmetrical
Systematical
Or
Extinguishable.

****

Maria Mellinger

WOOLEN BOREDOM

Woolen boredom
Settle about her throat
Like a thick turtleneck sweater.
Senility beads
In acrylic polyester blend balls
Which fall to the floor
Like sediment in a littered canal,
While a washing machine rinse cycle
Removes the stain of her existence.

****

Kim Vollmer

STRENGTH TO HOLD

my arms ache of strength to hold you
all day you are heavy before me
like a strong blowing wind
pressing and pressing you steady against me
I struggle through the day
smiling into your face
to myself.

****

Judy Belfield

CONFIDENCE

A cold sky told me
I had power,
stood me up tall as a redwood
in silhouette against its
hard blue backdrop
and every step I took
bounced, and was rooted,
at the same time.
I was giant
big as god
listening to whispers
kings must hear in their cradles
before they know
a mother's song.

One day
in late winter
as the afternoon sun fades
I'll hear it
as loud as Wellington's cannonade
as soft as dusk
all at once.

****

Elise Wylie Boucher

JOIE DE VIVRE: ON PACHELBEL'S CANON IN D

Like a leaf
I Float
Upon the air
That changes with each note
Graceful Sway
And spin
And, Lighthearted,
I am Elation.

Even after the music ends
And I have returned
From the ethereal plane
That claimed my soul
(The place where
I danced with
Joy)

My face is still
A Study in Rapture.

****

Amy Jo

THE DEAL

I looked to the future, and found the past,
caught a glimpse of horns, and withered scales,
had a vision of death, a deception of death,
and this endless dream began at long last
to move me, and I saw that love will prevail,
but the fire had found me; its wicked stealth,
creeping forth, consumed me, and an iron cast
of the goat appeared in my mind; its entrails
glowing red in the heat, and the wealth
of life, these blossoms of truth, held fast
in my hand--I stood amazed to see how frail
these images were, and then drew my last breath.

****

Maria Mellinger

EVEN ON A CLOCK

Even on a clock
With no hands
Time shall pass.

****

Mary Klein

TIME IS SPARING

Time is sparing
    Dwindling
Yet there's so much
    to eat.

****

Kim Vollmer

SHOCK VALUE

the past frames
mirrored colors of us
and my
eyes watch one color
faded and insignificant
once coupled with those of opposition
each color then becomes bold
and thick
and I wonder
how I'd tell them apart otherwise.

****

Maria Mellinger

FIVE FRIENDLY ALIENS

It all started in my bed, as usual. I had a frightening evening because I accidentally dyed a small patch of my forehead while touching up my roots. Theodora had an accident, too, and now sported multicolored fuzzy ears. I explained that all the teddy bears in Paris wore their fur that way, and being a fashionable teddy bear, she smiled. But we'd had enough excitement for the night, so I put on my Danny Wilson cassette and tried to sleep.

In my mind I saw a 1973 Capri wrapped in tin foil driving down the street. the inside was wrapped in tin foil as well, except for the ashtray with a "Keep on Truckin'" sticker and several complimentary Magna cigarettes stubbed out inside. Assuming it was another dream, I paid little attention when five aliens emerged, entered my house, picked up my bed, and complained about its weight.

"Don't call me heavy," I said, and it was then I realized I was actually speaking.

The next thing I knew, I was inside a space ship quite similar to the kind used in Japanese movies. I wondered if we were being moved through space on a huge fishing line that God himself was reeling in. There was no time between my spoken comment and the flying comets. It was as if Theodora and I were part of a fast-paced music video where transitional devices aren't necessary.

We were way up in space when I happened to look down and see all the people I hated dredging the I and M Canal in search of my body. They seemed upset, but it was probably because I left behind nasty poems and journal entries about them, and they feared these works might be published in my memory. The aliens, Theodora, and I laughed.

The few people I liked on earth seemed to realize I was in a much better place now. The nuns I worked for, in particular, went on and on about an eternal reward, and what a delight it was that I could get it (which means, of course, that anyone could get it). Theodora's friends held a beautiful service where The House at Pooh Corner was read aloud.

When the ship landed on the alien's planet, we instantly felt at home. It was no trailmafordian paradise, but there was the mandatory glass dome and a big brown bag of money in the zoo (what a thing to do).

Theodora was a big hit with her two-tone ears,

(continued)

and we used our paychecks to invest in Miss Clairol.

"And take me to a place,
Way up in space
Where I'm unusual.
I'll be where I won't feel alien..."

-"Five Friendly Aliens"
-Danny Wilson

****

Bob Loewe

WORLDS

I remember where I met you--
in a world of strong beer,
ten-year-old Chevys
and jobs done good,
where friends are
and have been
forever the same.
My world has changed
to a place where people
take showers before work
and tee-shirts are uncommon.
New friends live there,
and rivals to challenge
without bruising my knuckles.
Will you come along
to my other world?
The new and old words
spin in different directions.
If I keep one foot in each,
I'll split down the center
and you will love half a man
while the other half
lives half a life
and does half a job
as the result.
I chose my new world.
Will you come along
or stay where you are?
I wish you would change your mind.

****

Amy Jo

BEACH

nuclear bombs and atomic waste
President Bush in outer space
the monkey lies, the monkey screams
from L.A. hookers to the First Lady
on the beach in perfect shape
suntanned bodies of the human race
glance at death and smile sweetly
at their ostrich reflections, albeit so ugly.

****

Judy Belfield

IVORY TOWER

She lets her hair down
he climbs up
they both get down
get off.
He leaves
she pulls her hair back in
stares at
those four walls
or soap operas on TV
waits for the witch/mother to call
bring grub
and the new Cosmo.
Sometimes she closes the blinds
forgets the time
sings out to the hag,
"Not tonight--
guess what I've got."

****

Jerald Janes

WHEN THE WORLD DREAMS

The supremist dreams of rainbows
each color drowned out by the brilliance of white.

The utopian dreams of rainbows
each color overlooked due to his color blindness.

The suicide dreams of a path leading to happiness
he travels this path well, for he fears its dangers.

The humanist dreams of a path leading to happiness
he travels this path well, for he has many companions
along the way.

The elitist dreams of a sinking ship at sea, he feels it
necessary
to save the ship and does, thankful for his noble
intentions.

The armchair philosopher dreams of a ship at sea, he is
sinking and is saved by the ship, he is thankful for the ship.

The fashionable dreams of mass migrations of people, he
is accepted into the movement

The strange one dreams of mass migrations of people, he
does not understand the migratory destination.

The world turns downside up.
All that dream, awaken--it is morning.

****

Jerald Janes

EUROPE IS INSANE

Saw a bat tonight. Big deal itself. Swoops down under street light under tree-edge of front lawn. No sound, just bizarre acrobatics say, "I am not a bird."

I smoke cigarettes outside. the pack cost my last dollar. Somewhere in a pile of clothes is loose change unknown to me. Maybe another pack of cigarettes' worth.

That continent is very far, very far from me, tonight. I crave it so very much more, very much more, tonight.

Emotional health has a tendency to deteriorate to the point where one loses all essential touch with society.

Some respected leaders say, "Insane." I feel very comfortable and at home within the confines of my shut down mind...there resides the ability to exist as one's own determination sees fit, critique and analysis becomes folly in the folly.

THEORY: the spirit becomes too hungry for meaning and truth. It then will leave the body alone out of respect for it instead of destroying. Fondly one's physique is forced into auto-pilot. The body appears obsessed with the folly outside the folly, but more is happening than can be observed.

The spirit is alive and free, drying its wings of truth.

When you leave your home town you do not blow it up, you leave it be itself...without you.

****

Amy Jo

GOLD IN THE ATTIC

In the attic of my mind,
above the cellar of my soul,
behind a crack, in an alcove lies
dust and cobwebs of old;
ancient deceptions, evil smiles,
skulls with teeth of gold,
shattered promises, cruelly told,
petrified in nitrous mold.
Behind this crack, covered with dust,
hand in hand with an endless sea
of deadened dreams--chains of the free;
fossils of hope, hidden and boiling,
scrolls of bile, impaled memories,
and peering closely, one can see
my leather-bound insanity.

****

Jerald Janes

THE WISCONSIN SUN

Zeppo had an irrational fear of porcelain. He once told his darling wife, Aria that all porcelain was wrong. He believed firmly that mankind's wars were born solely of the desire for this commodity.

Zeppo stepped out into the sun of the Wisconsin sky. He enjoyed this new state. Everything was clean and pleasant. His mother said, "Zeppo, you're going to enjoy Wisconsin." He never felt so much joy before.

His new house was situated on a large parcel of land. First things first, he thought as he began to clear back the overgrowth in the backyard. He hacked away for a considerable time at a large bush. He then noticed something of a white composition deep within that very same bush. He backed away and turned his face up to the Wisconsin sky. "Hmmmmm....." he murmured, "wonder what that could be."

In a very strategic move, he pounced, like a doggy might pounce on a really big bowl of dog chow, upon the bush, offensively digging through branch and leaf to the object of his curiosity. With a barbaric swing, much like the swing of a really good professional baseball player, possibly the designated hitter, Zeppo tore away the last confining branch to reveal a toilet.

"ARIA!" he screamed in bloody fashion as he ran into the house. Aria saw his terribly pale face, as terribly pale as the floating curds in a Wisconsin cheese house, flash by her as he made his way to the security of the closet.

"Zeppo, you're being very hard to deal with right now."

Zeppo replied, "I don't care, there is a wild toilet in our backyard and I am not coming out until you call someone to pick it up!" Zeppo, upset by the trespassing toilet, was as upset as a garden upset by the hoe of the bewildered psychopathic homemaker. This toilet was a threat to the desired freedoms we all have that Zeppo had lost.

After a few days, he came out of the closet. He resumed his cleaning chores, but steered clear of the backyard. Life in the house eventually returned to normal.

It got much colder as fall set into the Wisconsin setting of this incredible tale. Every now and then, Zeppo would peer out the window into the backyard. The toilet was being surrounded by leaves fallen from the really big trees in his backyard, trees as really big as the area within the boundaries of the wonderfully big state of Wisconsin. Zeppo felt some relief.

The Wisconsin winter exploded with a fury. Eighteen inches of snow in two days, enough to drift over the toilet. All that could now be seen was a nice and healthy snow drift. NOW, Zeppo felt like a million bucks!

One night, Zeppo had a terribly terrible dream.

(continued)

Zeppo was standing alone in a basketball court, with the exception of that damned toilet across the floor, staring at him with its lid wide open, baby! The lights were very very low. It was real scary. The toilet became a tiger. The wind was blowing through the windows. People were screaming, not in the gym, but near by, near enough to be really spooky-like.

Zeppo awoke in a sweaty instant. Aria told him, "Darling, you must face that toilet! The man I married would not permit his life to be controlled by an abandoned toilet!"

Zeppo sobbed, "But dear, you don't understand!"

Aria shot back at him, "DAMN YOU, ZEPPO, IT'S THAT TOILET.....OR MEEEEEE!!!!!!!!" (Wow...she's pissed!)

This was no game anymore. Zeppo's paranoia was destroying his marriage. He must overcome his fear of porcelain or forever be enslaved by the home-wrecking substance.

The winter winds had blown the drifts in the backyard down considerably. In a short time, there was nothing to hide Zeppo from his adversary.

One January afternoon he tried to conquer the toilet. He was five paces out back when a sharp wind made a satanic growl as it passed above the lips of the toilet bowl. "NOPE!" yelled Zeppo as he dashed back to the closet.

Aria began to pack her suitcases. It was over for her. She was ready to leave Wisconsin and the toilet that stole her husband from her. "Okay, okay! I'll do it!" Zeppo shouted to his wife. "Just give me a minute and I'll show you!"

Aria began to count from sixty to zero.

Zeppo stepped proudly into the Wisconsin day, and walked a straight path, as straight as a hang-noose with an ethnic person that wandered into dairy territory a-hangin' from it, to the toilet. Aria watched in doubt.

Zeppo's shadow darkened the toilet....maybe it wasn't so scary after all. He began unbuttoning his trousers. Aria watched in curiosity.

Brave Zeppo faced his opponent. "Get ready you BASTARD!" he whispered through teeth a-gritted. Zeppo turned, let his trousers drop, and with no hesitation, sat on the toilet seat. Bare butt and fifteen degree porcelain met in mortal combat.

Aria now watched in disbelief.

Zeppo concentrated his eyesight on the image of his wife, staring through the window. He tightened his abdomen. He felt very much in control. The Pop-Tart that he ate late that last night moved through his lower intestine as if it had a calling, or something. He felt his sphincter pulsate. With a mighty yelp, he felt a metaphysical relief. His bowel had moved. Victorious and exhausted, he lost view of his wife. Losing consciousness, he whimpered, "...Aria...I....I've.... always....loved...you." With that he fell off the stool.

Aria ran from the house towards Zeppo. "Zeppo! ZEPPO! Oh, my dear Zeppo, I love you!" she cried. Our hero opened his eyes to the Wisconsin sun and then focused them on the face of his beloved wife.

"Am I alive?" he asked.

"Oh, YES, YES! You were so good Zeppo, I'm so proud of you!" Zeppo looked over to the commode.

"Is it over, honey?"

"Yes, YOU WON!" Aria cried.

"I...I.....I...LOVE YOU....TOO...ARIA," Zeppo whispered as he passed out again. He was rushed to the hospital, treated for exposure, and then released.

Zeppo and Aria moved to Dwight, Illinois and lived really happily ever after.

The toilet has been grown over again. Zeppo's poop still sits at the bottom of the bowl, hardened now into an indistinguishable white piece of stuff, a reminder to no one of the battle once fought between a man of honor and an appliance of ignorance under the Wisconsin sun.

****

Melynda Findlay

26TH & PULASKI

Just some chalk marks
On the sidewalk
They are your family's only memory
Of you.
They weren't for a child's game
    of hopscotch
    of marbles
No, they were the results of an adult's game
    of drugs
    of violence
That was played by a child.
Mister,
    you were much too young
    to meet this end.
What about your dreams
    of getting out
    of escaping
from your ghetto existence?
Did you think
Your ill-gotten gains
Were your ticket?
Then somebody done you wrong.
A deal gone bad--
Your dreams are shattered--
In a puff of smoke
from the barrel of a gun.

****

Bob Loewe

CRUMPETS

My mother, for some reason, has decided that my diet is too boring and that she is going to supplement it with various foreign and exotic foods. This week it was crumpets.

To find out more about this food that looks like a cross between an English muffin that's been skinned and an underdone pancake, I asked various people what they thought of crumpets. The first person I asked thought it was a car--small, foreign, and very expensive. My sister said a crumpet took second prize in last year's dog show.

Now, my father and I realized that we were totally on our own to figure out the most important thing--how to cook them.

Since they resembled English muffins, we determined the first thing we would try is putting one in the toaster. This appeared to be working pretty well until the toaster popped up and the crumpet didn't. That elusive crumpet had somehow managed to wiggle its way down into the toaster and fuse itself to the side. It would not allow itself to be pried out. My father, in a desperate attempt to subdue the delinquent pastry, turned the toaster over and began bouncing it on the counter. This produced nothing but seventeen pounds of bread crumbs stored up over years of toaster use. The crumpet remained firmly placed in the toaster, where it remains today giving a charred English flavor to all our toasted foods.

Next, we decided, since the crumpets also resembled pancakes, we would fry one. The fried crumpet looked great, but it tasted like a greasy English muffin. That one hit the trash after the dog refused to eat it.

At this point, we started giving the things names. Since the first held siege to our toaster, it became known as "Attila the Crumpet." The second we named the "Medieval Menace." My mother said that there was nothing medieval about it, and that it was a thoroughly modern food. My father then declared that, since it was a modern food, he would use a modern form of cooking, and he nuked one in the microwave. That one is being used in the bedroom as a night light.

The fourth time, we baked one, and this method seemed to work the best, so we cooked up the rest (both of them) in the oven.

We then served the delicacies (with coffee, of course) and went to McDonald's for lunch. So much for culture.

****

Bob Loewe

TO GRANDMA

We come from a society of competitors.
Starting as children, we are
scholastically judged by our teachers,
athletically judged by our coaches,
aesthetically judged by our peers.
Thos who would have us compete
do not understand the nature of words.
Perhaps baseball or science,
they understand fully.
But writers know what they don't.
There is no "best" in poetry--
no basis for competition.
Quatrains, sonnets, haikus,
limericks, epics, don't correlate.
Our work won't be lined up,
judged first, second and third.
No stick exists to measure our efforts--
no gauge for literary content.
Only "personal best" exists.
Poetry doesn't get outdated,
pushed to the back of the closet
like last year's styles.
Poet laureates may change,
But their poems remain--
Not relegated to old newspapers
Like former heavyweights.
Who's to judge whether
Nash is better than Brooks?
How do you compare
e e cummings and Emily Dickinson?
Did Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning
slug it out during breakfast?
Poets critique poems
as a way to help the author,
not to prove they're better.
Let Philistines judge and compare,
trying to choose the best.
Poets know better.

****

Kris Bullmer

MATERNAL INSTINCTS

On days when the children
are driving me crazy,
are teasing and fighting,
are climbing the walls,
There's a lot to be said
for mothers who eat their young!

****

Bob Loewe

WHAT ADULTS DON'T SEE

The white line plods by
in 4/4 time,
wheels slurring in circles,
legs of light from poles
appear to grab the car
and pull it to them
more legs grab the car
and pull.
Grabbing and pulling
down the street.
When I was four
I rode in the back
and thought legs of light
were how the car worked.
Or I would ride
and look at the moon
and its dark patches,
thinking of it as Earth's mirror
and that maybe
another little boy was there
riding in a car,
seeing the Earth as his moon
and knowing that light legs
pull the car along.
I was heartbroken
when I found the moon was cold
and the car ran
on dead plants and dinosaurs
and stars cannot be reached
by standing on the roof at night.
I secretly hoped
the Mars lander would send pictures
of one big eye
looking into the camera.
Now I am learned.
I know the magic behind radio
and television.
I even know the inner most secrets
of my car.
But you will never convince me
beams don't reach out
from the streetlights
and pull my car along.
And I will always wave
to my opposite on the moon.

****

d f aiello

FOR MY FRIEND

He lies so still, a Robin
should rest upon his shoulder
and peck--just once--to
remind him to
breathe.

The reminder will not be
a welcomed thing. To breathe
is to allow the pain, like a lover's
sweet no, to envelope his bones that
jangle inside wasted flesh. Swallowing
his will like a thirsty child.

A last pull on malignant lungs
is anticipated. And with luck
God will close his fly
with one zipping motion, allowing
dignity to follow the man.

****

Kim Vollmer

YOUTH

bring me
take me
young and unjaded
I'll pretend
and squeeze in among them
become them
they're us
and we
unjaded
arms unloaded
given purpose
will provide;

an ocean arena
masses of youth in a liquid form
come together in a slow gathering
of unquenched desire

pelting at the shore--relentless--
and violently ignorant to
the effects of war;

instability was always created
for the youth
a cause to grope for hands
to hold us united
somehow we needed fear to perform.

****

Elise Wylie Boucher

RETURNING THROUGH OHIO

I'd forgotten how large the sky
And that is what I remember

Not the sleeping child
Dreaming through a thousand miles
On the car seat beside me

Nor the years of sorrow
Of separation spent
On the claustrophobic coast

Nor the anger
Exploding with each word
My father and I shared

Only that
I'd forgotten how open home is.

****

Amy Jo

PATH

The bridge is upside down, and its lights reflect a smooth path across the water; I wonder if I can walk on it? The wind rifles icy fingers through my hair, and blows smoke from my cigarette into my eyes. After a moment, I flick the butt onto the gravel, and gaze up into the pale face of the moon. He is full tonight, perhaps bloated with the weary thoughts of others, such as mine. I look back at the water. The surface is placid, revealing nothing and hiding everything, broken only by the moon's beam and reflections of the white and green lights of the bridge. My insides ache, and I wonder where you are now; are you happy? I move closer, standing at the edge of the canal, and the path of lights seems to beckon me. I can almost hear it whisper, "Come, float with us." I close my eyes, and imagine sinking below the path's blackened depths, the freezing water rushing into my nose and mouth and lungs, and I settle in peace at the bottom. Then a car pulls up, and a man rolls down the window, and calls, "Waiting for somebody?" So I get into the car, and leave with him. It is the next best thing.

****

Bob Loewe

THREE GIRLS WENT WALKING

Three girls went walking--
Look-alike shoes
Matching skirts,
Matching shirts,
Look-alike minds,
Preaching to all,
"Be yourself!"

****

Blake Axelson

DOWNEY IN '92

What this country needs isn't Bush or Munchkin Mike Dukakis, but rather a man of distinction, a man of character, a man like Morton Downey Jr. While you may ask why, the answer will soon be revealed, but only if you remove that degrading smirk from your face!

The U.S. faces many challenges ahead. Starting with the budget, just think what a President Downey could tell Congress. "The only thing you guys ever passed was kindergarten mathematics!" With a quip like that, Congress would go up in a riot just as it should and did so many years ago when the nation was young.

Morton would also be strong with terrorists. "You guys don't scare me! The only thing you terrorized was your mother after she saw what she gave birth to!"

Most important of all is how successful Downey could be in campaigning. There would be no way for an opponent to out-insult him, therefore leaving Morton to scream his way to the White House.

Imagine the reaction he'd give to the question of capital punishment. "You bet I believe in the death penalty, if a friend of mine is killed by someone do you think a prison term would be enough? Noo, hoo hoo!"

With all this in mind, we hope you agree that Morton is the best hope for mankind to date. Thank you for reading, and remember on election day in '92, punch 6 for Loudmouth.

Downey in '92: He's an asshole and proud of it!

****

Bob Loewe

MEDIOCRE PEOPLE

Mediocre people beget hordes.

****

Maria Mellinger

STARTLING ICE WATER

Startling
Ice water
Slap in the face
As we pass
And you ask,
"How've you been?"

****

Paul Pritchett

NOAH'S WOODEN YACHT

You are better than me.
Just because I don't feel.
I assume no one does.
You've capture her heart
along with the animals.
My mind is gone.
Your mind permeates the Bible
Also your staff is longer
than mine.

****

Kim Vollmer

FIREFIGHTER

sometimes I wake in the darkness
of my bedroom and I can hear the
world lain heavy upon your chest,
slowly, painfully you exchange old
air for new--sometimes I wait so long
for your next breath that I fall back
to sleep

I awake frightened and chilled with
the dawn, for the shadow of your body
that I'd seen on the floor through
the darkness, appears now to be my
blanket in a jumble

perhaps I had covered you
from the chills of night--
I lift the blanket to find ashes on
my floor
my flame is gone
and tears comfort me.

****

Kim Vollmer

FRED'S FLAG

Name's Randee, I am male, I spell my name with two e's on the end because that's the way "Randee of the Redwoods" from MTV spells his name and he's my idol. If you don't know him, it's not particularly important to my story, but if you do, it's just an added plus. I just wanted to start out by saying that I am a man and I have been one for two whole days now.

I'm a freshman at Marquette Unversity in Milwaukee, Wisconsin--home of Buck's Bar, all you can drink for only a buck (slang translation: one American dollar). Hammered, smashed, blitzed out of your mind dribbling drunk all for less than the cost of a pack of cigarettes. I know because I just recently took up smoking, not bad at it if I must say so myself, and also because I spent an unjustifiable amount of time and money at the aforementioned establishment.

I drank at Buck's with my fraternity buddies, not yet brothers for my lack of passing an initiation, and it was at Buck's Bar the other night that they finally told me why I hadn't been able to get accepted as a brother. They told em I was still a boy, and would remain one until I made a statement, went against the odds, did my own thing (individuality was very important to them--they're a real liberal bunch of guys) and proved myself worthy of being called a man. They told me I had one last chance to prove myself to them, and that's how this whole fiasco started.

After the guys, who stand proud and call themselves men, stumbled out of the bar that night, I sat there alone and contemplated my situation. Actually I was laying on the ground amidst peanut shells and tipped-over bar stools. Sometime after two a.m. I passed out and just after three I came to with this amazingly clever plan.

I left the bar before closing time which is not like me at all, I must have hurt my head when I fell off the stool. On a regular night, Stan, the bartender, would carry me out, drunk and buckless and tuck me in on the bench outside the door. He always woke me in the morning when the bar opened at eleven, and I became their first customer of the day--everyday. Now that's something to be proud of.

Off I went, plan intact, on that beautiful two-more-weeks-and-all-this-damn-snow-will-melt morning to find my best buddy Fred. Fred is known as a "dead-head" because he follows the band, The Greatful Dead, to watch them in concert over and over, to meet "beautiful people," and to "live, live, live!" he tells me. All day long he hums and mumbles Greatful Dead songs to himself, and sometimes to me personally when I get overly upset about this fraternity problem I'm having.

Fred had been counting the days until the next concert; it was to be held at the Rosemont Horizon in Chicago, so I knew he'd help me with my scheme of all schemes. My plan had many advantages, if all went

(continued)

well I'd get national coverage for heroism, well, maybe not heroism, perhaps, courage, well at least originality and stupidity but national coverage is national coverage. And I'd get into that fraternity and become a fraternity brother like my father was, and like his father was and like his father was; if all else failed, I was sure to get a tan.

So Fred and I packed up the necessities which consisted of a toothbrush, nine dollars and seventeen cents, mostly in change, in fact all of it except for two dollar bills, and the flag of the United States of America. Fred had the flag hanging on the wall of our shared dorm room. He had forgotten where he found it, but he knows he didn't steal it. Fred doesn't steal. Fred also has an awful memory.

Sometimes he even forgets my name. He apologizes for it, blames it on all the acid his parents did in the 60's. I don't mind it much, his forgetfulness, since he's my best buddy. He will be for life now since he's letting me use his flag to make my statement of individual existence. Not to mention follow in the footsteps of my dad's dad's dad, and if all else fails, he's helping me to get a tan.

When I told him the plan, which I'll tell you as soon as I get to that part of my story, he rolled up the flag and threw it over his shoulder, being careful not to let it touch the ground, he grabbed his ticket to the Greatful Dead show and headed south with me beside him.

So here's the plan. I hitchhike down to Florida (part with Fred in Chicago) for the "Spring Break" festivities and right in the middle of a crowd of a couple thousand sunburnt teenagers, and in front of the MTV camera crew (who film live reports on the hour of the happenings at Daytona)(*maybe even meet Randee of the Redwoods) I proceed to, using the flag of the United States of America as a beach blanket, get tan and get some heavy recognition.

We got into Chicago later that day, after a couple dozen different rides, barefoot and bladder-full. Why? Well, I tell you, the easy one first, our bladders were full because that's a part of life. And barefoot? Because when we got 70 miles from Milwaukee Fred noticed that there wasn't any more snow on the ground and decided we should lose our shoes, it was the 'hippie-on-the-road,''boy turning man,' 'Dead-head' thing to do, so we did it. A sort of bonding experience that at the time seemed logical, almost normal.

So there we were in Chicago unable to use a public restroom due to the popular policy of "no shoes, no service." I suggested the obvious, an alley. Fred is a natural lover, he doesn't litter, smoke cigarettes, or use any product that comes in an aerosol can--he won't kill a spider, how could I expect him to piss on the side of a wall.

On Michigan Avenue, we discover a building with many people going in and out, too busy to notice our naked feet. The instant we get in the door Fred throws the flag to me, gets through the thickness of the crowd and I can hear his bare feet slapping the marble-like floors. He's gone. I was worried about him, I knew he'd find a toilet but it wouldn't be long before he forgot I was with him and he'd forget and come looking for me. He'd just head for the Horizon when the time came and until then he'd just float around. Me, I can't float, I wasn't ready to hitch on my own--I was even half hoping he'd forget about the Dead Show and come with me to Florida. He'd get full credit for ownership of the flag, I assure you. I had to find him, dragging the flag behind me, I listened for his footsteps. Made it though crowds, down hallways and to a bathroom--found Fred, lost the flag.

Fred was pretty upset about it, not so much that I lost it but that it was touching the ground no doubt, and "that's just not cool," he tells me. I set him up with something to do while I retraced my steps back to the flag. He likes abstract art, and we appeared to be in an art gallery so I got him interested in a picture on the wall and told him not to move.

I hear him singing a song as I walk away knowing that there's just no chance he'll forget about the concert, and wondering how he can remember every note, every word to all those songs and can't even remember my name at times. I located the flag, so did about thirty other people and a guy who stood right in the middle of the heaping stripes and smiled as a photographer took his picture. My life was over, dejected and hungry I walked out onto Michigan Avenue again. I knew Fred was hungry also and would soon forget the picture and that I told him to stay put, to go in search of food. He'd forget about me and the flag, probably even forget to go back to school after the spring break.

I walked over to the lake, I couldn't swim. I put my bare feet into the lake--started my short descent into death and a miracle occurred. I suddenly, knee-high and knocking at death's door, remembered that my cousin's ex-girlfriend's brother's old roommate's father knew someone who worked with a woman who had neighbors that had grandkids that attended Joliet's Junior College. So, I guess you could say I heard from a reliable source that it is a great place to escape. I need an escape. Well, I did two days ago but now I'm here at JJC, started smoking, watched TV fifteen hours in a row for the first time in my life and I might even have a part-time job in the cafeteria. The only thing bugs me really is that the guy, the artist guy, he got all the credit for standing on Fred's flag. And I'm not even tan. And about the "fraternity thing," I think I'd rather be a man on my own terms. Thanks, Fred.

****

Maria Mellinger

THE ALIENATION OF DEAF TED AND DANOOTA

The alienation of Deaf Ted and Danoota
Occurred on a ghastly ghostly night
Upon which normally we'd be a sight
Of ghastly ghostly and me.
Our separation came as a surprise
For normally we normal ride together
And thought we'd normally stay forever
And be always Deaf Ted, Danoota, and me.
But condemnation has a way
Of breaking up what was today
That was all she had had to say
To Deaf Ted, Danoota, and me.
(Malcolm, however, remained intact.)

****

Maria Mellinger

LITTLE PRINCE

Little prince
Arthur's child
Sing my song
In whispers.
Ocean boy
Arthur's child
Wish me dreams
In kisspers.

****

Elise Wylie Boucher

PRITHEE, RETURN...

But I lost you
Somewhere in that space
Between sleep and dreams
That peculiar place
Where nothing is as it seems

But I was confused
and I cast about wildly
Seeking your sight, your feel
Listening to you say mildly
"Seek me--I am your ideal."

But I lost you
somewhere in that space
Between sleep and dreams.

****

Jerald Janes

DR. JOSEPH CAMPBELL

Hunger-self reality.
America is the holy land,
see it your self.
Vision quest, self visualization.
Those diabolical Indians, I can't see the land, honey!
OUR land has no tradition, theirs does.

Nationalism, economics.
Honey, I still can't see the land!
The world is one.

Dissolve your nation.
Strengthen your family.
Teach your child.
Regain self respect.
See the land.
See the land.
One world, tribal life.

The rebirth of myth
inward consciousness
Discover.
Discover internal depths.
Discover the land.

Divinity of neighbors.
Harmonize.

Where the hell is that camp ground, honey!?

Infancy to wisdom
Danger resides in the distraction.
Myth.
Myth is not fact
Metaphoric dream, dream always.
the metaphysical
the psyche
the myth
Can you see the land?

American free fall
no more strings to pull
automation of humanity.
the machine provides the mask
you provide the ugliness
wear the mask, hide your soul.

Farewell to social power.

Greetings to humanity.

****

Bob Loewe

PERMISSION

Perhaps we should be allowed
to kill people
who cut us off
or do fifty-five in the left-hand lane;
to make blowhards
listen to their own jokes;
to hunt down the Carnival Cruise lady
and surgically remove her smile;
to force-feed Ms. Redgrave
Weight Watchers
lasagna and turkey so tender
until she surrenders;
to find the inventor of oat bran
and make him eat cake;
to dye George Bush's hair gray
and break telephones that eat quarters.
When we hear, "Have a nice day," twenty times,
we should be allowed to insert staples
into lips that would say it again.
We're already allowed to
poison rats,
swat mosquitoes,
electrify criminals.
Anything is possible in this world.
After all,
songbirds are shot for sport.

****

Amy Jo

WHEN

When I look into the mirror,
The mirror looks back at me,
And I fish-close my eyes
To no avail, for I still see,
So I drain the bottle, and turn to face
What I am, and always will be.

****

Elise Wylie Boucher

YOU CAN TRY

You can try
To stab my spirit
With your wicked wounding words.
But I
Have armed myself
With a weapon of my own--

I know you now.

Ciao, baby.

****

jerry janes

IF

If the Atlantic Ocean disappeared
we'd have that much more farmland.
If Gov. James Thompson started to play guitar
he'd be good if he put his heart into it and practiced often.
If photographic paper was psychic
we'd be able to wipe out bad memories.
If eyeglasses were replaced with soup cans
animals would still laugh at us just the same.
If you could talk to people in your television
it would be useless because they can't hear you anyway.
If Bruce Springsteen gave all his money away
animals would still laugh at us just the same.
If human skin was transparent
it would take a while, but we'd all get used to it.
If light bulbs lost their vacuum
they wouldn't work.
If human vision was twice as acute
libraries would be 50% smaller.
If quarters were reissued in silver
people would try top only spend dimes and nickels.
If it weren't timely to be squeaky clean
America would be a cleaner place.
If JUCO pretty boys and girls shaved their heads
animals would still laugh at us just the same.
If I didn't press another type key

****

Maria Mellinger

THERE'S AN UNFORGETTABLE COMMUNICATION

There's an unforgettable communication
In the silence that you spoke to me;
Like the carnival music you could hear as a child
When you became one with the wind and trees
And a memory.
There's a tenderness in the strength of a touch
When you've been gone so long and I need so much
Like a memory.
But I know there's only one wind in the sky
And I wait
For it to blow and pass me by,
Like a memory.
Now there's a silent circus coming to town
And the children have gathered all around;
You have to climb to the highest limb of the tree
To find quiet and wind, and then find me
And a memory.

****

TO WIN MY LOVE

Gently hold me
For I am fragile.

I am a spiderweb
In morning, covered with dew
Sparkling in the sun
And you must be a spider
To discover my strengths

Tread me easily.
Don't sweep me away
With your unthinking
Human hand

****

Kim Vollmer

INHIBITION

If you watch me
will I dance as freely
as when you stood
quietly at the door
me, unaware
untamed
can I be untamed with you
would you let me?

****

Elise Wylie Boucher

NOCTURNAL SONG

It is vague
This need of you
The passion of despair left me long ago
Leaving only drifting sorrow
The feeling of a missing part
A portion of my soul forever lost

Lost to you.

I don't cry anymore--oh no--
My tears dried long ago.

But sometimes
After midnight
I awaken
Touch the place you once occupied
And realize I am alone

And know a deeper sorrow
Than ever I felt in all my violent passion.

****

FIESTA

At 3:05, all is still.
Even the goldfish sleep.
Yet there he sits,
lost in the paneling,
rich, tawny grains intertwining,
chasing and twirling
in fiesta.
The ceiling fan turns,
casting shadow current
off the canisters and
coffee pot,
text pages blown slightly
by its breeze.
A little mottled cat stalks in,
claws tickety ticking over tile.
It looks to its human,
wondering what's the matter
with its servant.
Clock hands wave in circles.
The feline ticketies out.
Swimming in silence
sits the sole human,
except for penscratch on paper
and a million screaming
colors and shapes.

****

Jerald Janes

A CASUAL COMMENT

At heart, I'm nothing.

But I have to fan my tail somewhat so I can get about you.

I detest how it has become and remains, the best is to be made of it all.

Where did we get out of the river? It was innocent at first, for we were hungry and the shiny new world caught our eyes.

Complications set in and we were diseased.

The overindulgence, the gluttony, each becoming his own personal god, it became the norm. We continue.

Once I believed in you, yes. My life was much happier, but somehow I fell back into the river. So it all bounces back and forth, okay?

We've all been on one side for too long. I can't even get my own good unless you shut up for once.

I'll give my all to you. Make what you want from me and my hands, I only hope enough of you understand as I understand me and you.

I am not what I believe. I am what you will make me.

Clay I am, formless and void of markings. Fill me and make my life immortal as I wish you can.

Help me as I help you. This is my statement.

****

John Schmitz

UNDERCOVER PLOWMAN

So grow grass and barbed-wire in a basement
And situate a wattage sun.
Collect a company of cotton clouds and
Ropws and rows of well-dressed scarecrows.
A dung heap here and a dung heap there
Plus that perpetual reeking stink atmosphere
Of pigs
Falling prostrate beneath the suspended rubber udder
Emanating 2% Prairie Farms into equal-portioned puddles.
"Such rustic religion," breathes the Plowman,
Sweet teat in hand as the clock strikes four.

****

Elise Wylie Boucher

INSIDE

I am a Muse
Eyes away
--And pen scribbling across page
Paint across paper
Drama across stage--
Looking inward ever inward
To fling this all away

I am a Fury
Eyes blind
--And heart tormented by words unkind
Emotions by tying binds
Soul by passing time--
I chase myself and find
No other fool so sublime.

****

Anna Danbury

MARRIAGE

I have proved my love
By ignoring your attempts
To drive me insane.

****

Kim Vollmer

LOVE

your eyes are a magnet to the sky
so many worlds beyond
they are sharp and wicked
the eyes of a bird
who knows how to fly
but won't go alone
pecking at my lips, cheeks, and chin
blood becomes the slow run
of a rolling drop
I roll back my head
as you catch me in your arms
red frames my face
my hair is saturated
with heavy red kisses
too heavy to float
too light to fly
two in love
too in love

****

Kim Vollmer

HONEY-COLORED LITTLE BODIES

warm summer afternoons
when it would drizzle rain
on our fun and play
we'd sit up
under the awning
of my front porch
watching the drops
slap the hot sidewalk cool
the sun peeking out
hiding part-way behind a cloud
the drizzle would only last minutes
stopping
again sprinkling
on and off
like the sun
easing back and forth
behind a cloud
gathered in the shade of the awning
we waited not saying a word
five or six of us
just out of the three foot pool
my dad bought, and gathered the neighbors
to help us put up each year
we'd all run up the steps with
our wet suits sagging and hanging
on our bony, honey-colored little bodies
soaked wet, from swimming, we'd all
huddle under one beach towel
happily out of the rain.

****

Bob Loewe

NIGHT COMPANIONS

Greetings, nightmares,
You have come to disturb me.
What form do you take tonight?
You come as soon as my eyes shut,
Shrieking in my head,
Crawling around my skull.
I've seen thousands of your forms,
And each night your bring new ones,
Intensifying like gravity--
Fear = nightmares per second squared--
Until I sit up
And shake you off
Then drift back to sleep
And witness still new forms
From the flip side
Of my imagination.
The curse of creativity.

****

Anna Danbury

VINYL PLAYGROUND

I saddle a high-tech stationary bike, and
    try to accelerate my heart rate.
After this warm-up I wander into the stale
    workout room, people move, air doesn't.
A multitude of chrome machines seem
    capable of a multitude of pain.
I'm finally feeling motivated after doing the
    leg squat machine.
After completing ten machines, my complimentary
    towel is damp and full of make-up.
The sweat not soaked up by the towel, drips into
    my eyes, stinging from the salt,
My arms start to ache, my legs soon follow,
    but I'm almost finished.
My hair is wet, my sweat suit is badly
    stained, what a mess.
But when the cool night air hits me
    outside, I do feel pretty good.
And despite all the minor discomforts, I
    know that I'll come back.
And do more "time" at this chrome and
    vinyl playground of the eighties.

****

Maria Mellinger

SHE WANTS MIRACLES

She wants miracles
Wrapped in wax paper
Tied with a bow
Like the one in her hair,
And she wants true believers
To court at her door
And turn away the suitors
That left her before.
Wax paper miracles
Come easy.

****

John Schmitz

A NOTHING LOVE

Disappear or die,
Then I'll commit
Then I'll love you forever.

That perfect past, memory, so pure and smooth,
Is so easy to consume.
Love in a vacuum, on another planet, an island--
An unpolluted breeze,
Void of poisonous reality or spreading ennui.

Disappear or die,
Then I'll commit,
Forever faithful to your name.

****

Elise Wylie Boucher

REQUIEM FOR LOVE

Name me exile then
And have it done
    Shun me
    Burn me
    Stone me
    Turn me
Away from all you are

Don't kill me kindly

Pass the judgment
And leave my love
Incinerated at the stake.

****

Maria Mellinger

WHAT A FASHION TO BE ALONE

What a fashion to be alone
To hide your head inside a home
To know no words
To feel no air
Unaware of another's care--
What a lonely coat to wear.

****

Kim Vollmer

LONELY GROWS THIS FLOWER

lonely grows this flower
the sun has lost its radiance
and warmth
the wind has lost its cool
fresh movement
the days have lost their laughter
for the children
they have grown
and the nights have lost their
whispers and crickets--
lonely grows this flower
the last one
and so afraid.

****

Jerald Janes

RAIN ON THE WINDOW

I close my eyes again, while she weaves me into her web.
I leave the flat, but fall back, into her.
Nauseous from my discover, I close my eyes again.

Midnight, I pray for midnight.
She'll be asleep. I will not be.
At midnight I'll escape her compassion.
At midnight I'll fall out of love.

It approaches twelve.
She smiles in her sleep.
She is beautiful to me.

I rise from her body,
deservedly.
I move from the bed,
rightfully.

I close the flat door,
as the binding of our relationship straightens.
I neglect to ease the outside door,
as it slams shut.

I gaze in guilt down the dampened street.
A light flashes across my view,
coming from our bedroom window.

I charge down the puddled walk to my car.
She is coming.

I turn the corner, and slip.
She is coming.

I know that my car is of no protection.
She is coming.

I juggle the keys.
She is coming.

the groggy beast rolls em to the freeway.
She is coming.

Sixty, seventy, eighty.
She is coming.

I feel her loving hand cradle my feet,
I feel her deep stomach against my back,
I feel her moist breath rush through my hair.
I feel her.
I smell her.
I taste her.

I awaken to find her at my side in our bed.
"You're dreaming," she says.
She strokes my brow and whispers, "Go to sleep>"
I turn away to stare out the window.
The rain rolls down the glass.
The night continues its sleep.

I hate her.

I hate her.

I hate her.

The rain still rolls down the glass.
The night still sleeps.

I turn my head and whisper, hoping she will not hear,

"I love you"

"I know," she replies.

I close my eyes again.

****

Judy Belfield

WINDOW

Winter dusk falls;
rain drizzles
headlights race
neon signs wink.
Evening wakes,
stretches its arms through the trees,
crooks a come-hither finger
to the weekend:
an invitation everyone seems to welcome.
Tires hiss by
people speed to
yellow-lit apartments
enlivened by the squeals of babies
or dark silent foyers
or gray-hazed porches...
everybody going home
to meet an anxious dog or cat,
or husband, or wife,
or someone, or no one.
They'll sit down to dinner
or grab a bite and run
or flick on the television,
the radio, the stereo.
I watch them
through a restaurant window
go wherever they go.

****

Elise Wylie Boucher

THERE ARE NO WINDOWS

There are no windows
In my wall

But I cannot bear the blank
So I
Pasted
Pictures upon it.

(Unicorns Castles Calm Seascapes)
(Gryphons Gardens Warm Fireplace)

And I lie in comfort
Looking upon it
Oh, beautiful thing it is!
This window
Of my own making
Is faithful.

(Shows me only what I wish to see)
(This is where I hide from reality)

****

John Schmitz

THE SHADOWS FLEE FROM GRACELAND

Pullman, Pullman, number seven
Heaven-bound on this Babelesque passage.
Decapitated angel and
Angel of Death guarding a black slab.
Marshall Field and Christmas--
EQUITY INTEGRITY,
Slush, sludge, and withered oak.
Sacred Palmerian temple erupted from the earth--
Petrified and hollow howling.
Fisher-Price crypt-city crawling with the irony
Of vivacious blues, reds, and greens
While next door, a pyramid of all things
Passively denies the specter of time.

****

Anna Danbury

SHADOWS PLAY

Shadows play.
What does this mean?
How do they play?
Some shadows go this way,
And some shadows go that way,
some are wavy lines
~~SOME ARE VERY STRAGHT~~
some have crazy angles,
some have ROUNDED SHAPE.
Always very different,
Several times a day,
they climb all over everything!
And that's how shadows play.

****

Maria Mellinger

THE DAY WAS OVERCAST

The day was overcast,
But a little light came through.
People were walking past my window,
But no one that I knew.
The telephone was dead,
But I didn't expect a call.
People were stopping at my window,
And I didn't know them at all.
I tried to write my experience,
Then I found I had none.
People were looking in my window,
And I didn't know a one.

****

Maria Mellinger

THE NIGHT MY POEMS CAME TO LIFE

I was in bed, as usual. Sleeping, for me, is a hobby I like to practice whenever I get the chance. Theodora was there, of course, dressed in pink Snoopy pajamas with booties attached. I used to love those kind of pj's when I was a kid, but these days I settled for sweat pants and an old Duran Duran t-shirt.

The night before, I had stayed up until 5 a.m., writing desperately trying to fill my ten-page requirement. I was no longer satisfied with turning in old poems in Creative Writing class, and so I pushed my pen until it came up with enough ink to satisfy the paper. Some of the poems came from old ideas, which I didn't really consider cheating, since the stuff couldn't possibly get any worse than its original form.

I went through every notebook I had kept from freshman year on up, searching for things scribbled in the margins, and ignoring the names of current "loves" and hideous cartoons of the Sisters of St. Francis. I found reading assignments that might have helped me pass a quiz or two, phone numbers that could have gotten me out of my house on a Friday night, and every here and there, a quote, phrase, or strange little image that could still be amusing in some revised and rewritten way.

I found cliche lines, written in total earnest or pain, I'm sure, that I actually laughed over. I found sophomoric notes about flowers, hearts and (gag, muffle, muffle...)

You can imagine how horrible the experience was.

But it was also in these notebooks that I found lines about "poems written in crayon on brown paper bags," which was shorted and used in "Richard's Library." I found the patterns for sonnets, those good old ABAB, etc. lines, plotted out; patterns that I now have memorized but once had to follow like Mom's Simplicities.

I didn't find anything written about Theodora, although I had planned to write a series of books about her when I was in the fourth grade. I even went so far as to copy all the plots of the Clifford books, ready to modify them to suit her needs. But she seemed content anyway, maybe wishing I'd turn off the light so she could sleep, but otherwise okay.

Tonight, however, it was past midnight and our room was already dark. I thought for a little while about the larger than life term paper I had due in one more day, then decided to rest tonight and work the 5 a.m. shift again tomorrow. I felt a little guilty about putting off the work, but I just hated seeing those little bags under Theodora's eyes when I deprive her of her sleep several nights in a row.

And so I drifted off.

It was around 3 a.m., I guess, when something poked me awake. It might have been one of my notebooks--they all had bent and misshapen wires sprouting in every direction--or it might have been the "writer's notebook" I killed off a couple of stories ago. Whatever it was, I jumped up in bed, and Theodora jumped with me, more from the force of my movement than her own fear, I think.

I had the cold and fuzzy realization--like the wet washcloths Mom used to put on my forehead when I had a fever--that my poems, my stories, everything I had written recently, had surrounded my bed. I didn't actually see any faces, as most of my work dealt with abstract images, but I felt their presence.

"What do you want?!" I cried melodramatically.

They all answered at once, in a great cacophony of voices, tones, and undercurrents. "What's my point?" "Am I about God?" "What's my third line supposed to mean?" And "Why don't we have titles?" "How come you misspelled this word in my sentence?" "Why don't you write 'the end' at my end? I can't tell if I'm part of the next page or if we just look good together." On and on...

I tried to be as polite as I could . After all, these were my creations. No matter how insensitive they turned out to be, I had to have some compassion.

"Listen," I said, quite calm now, "I just wrote you. As soon as I finished writing you, I lost control of you. Other people are going to decide what your point is."

I remembered my senior year in high school, when I wrote a villanelle entitled, "Simply Breathe." The nun who moderated the school's literary magazine was convinced the poem was all about God, and she wanted to capitalize every "he" in it. I thought it was fine if she got God out of the poem, but I didn't want Him to be forced down people's throats with a capital "H," and I brought her to tears over this point.

I continued. "The people who read you will decide what your third line means. And if they don't get anything out of you, well then, they'll just decide I'm some bratty kid trying to be an artist. And you don't have titles because I'm lazy. And you're misspelled because I'm lazy. And I don't write 'the end' because most people are intelligent enought to know when one poem ends and a second begins, especially if there's a line or a page separating it from the next."

The poem that asked about 'the end' seemed wounded by my last remark, but cheered up a little when I winked into the darkness and said, "Ask that other page out if you think you look good together." The other page giggled faintly in the backgroud.

It was now 3:05 a.m., as poems don't usually take up much time, and I settled back into bed. My work gradually floated out of the room, and I held Theodora. She was staring directly into Nick Rhodes' face on my t-shirt, and we both fell asleep and dreamed of Clifford, the big red dog.

****

Bob Loewe

ALLITERATION

Perverse
Professor
Penwarren
Periodically
Preaches
Poetic
Principles.
Perhaps
People
Pondering
Penwarren's
Ponderous
Poems
Prefer
Pandering to
Promiscuous
Parties.
Perhaps
Pupils
Probed
Poems
Previously.
Perhaps
Pupils
Partake
Poetry Painstakingly.
Probably not.

****

Amy Jo

BOOK

I opened the book, and read the first chapter.
The burnt pages unfolded, and swept me away--
vivid scenes of evil, sweet haunting laughter;
my eyes were covered in a wretched cloak of grey.
I saw the beginning end; the turtle did not stir
and the scent of life surrounded me--death and decay.
Out of the blackness rose a single pillar
engraved with Druidic symbols: "All who slay
shall slay again," and a shadowed overture
of sound gritted in Fate's teeth. The silent refrain
moved Death to seek me, longing my soul to purge;
he passed and turned and passed again.
After the last chapter, I looked, and closed the door,
and from the echoes, I found there was no life before.

****

Bob Loewe

A BAD BUT NECESSARY POEM

I thought of you today--
Our two-year anniversary.
Just could not forget the way
You were my loving adversary.
So thin and pale
And I so round.
Although you would laugh,
Your eyes didn't hide
The tears in your soul
From the years that you cried.

February and March
And all through the spring
We danced and we laughed
And read poetry.
The semester flew by--
We skipped most of our classes,
Worked overtime
To pay for expenses.
The slips came in the mail
And all our grades were the same letters.

I loved you I thought
And tried not to be cross
As we nearly were fired
Because you fought with the boss.

I left your apartment
And can't forget why.
I got you to laugh.
You taught me to cry.
I drank with my friend.
I felt I was owed.
I got over you though
And am glad to know
You married another
And left me alone.

I owe you.
I loved you.
I hate you.
Goodbye, Kim.

****

Bob Loewe

AFTER ALL OF THIS

After all of this,
Shall we escape gravity
On the wings of a mind?

****

Maria Mellinger

THE PAPERBACK COPY

The paperback copy
With paragraphs underlined,
Pages torn out,
Corners pressed down for lack of a bookmark,
And held together
With a complex pattern of rubber bands,
Seems to the the
Most loved book.

****

Bob Loewe

THE PLOT

A foe snuck into my house,
bringing subversives and saboteurs
who stocked the kitchen
and laid in stores of beer.
Every time I pass the fridge
a beverage calls
"Bob, look at me.
You're thirsty,"
And it leaps into my grip.
Then a possessed bag of Doritos
jumps from the shelf
into my free hand.
The enemy meanwhile
causes a sandwich to materialize.
I take up the self-sacrificing food
and go to the next room.
The demons jump into the TV
or the stereo.
Somehow they always know
which will be more interesting.
It must be a Communist plot,
a sub-manifesto manifesting.
I sit around gaining weight
and neglecting my homework.
Reds will take over our nation.
We will all be ignorant and suffer
from high blood pressure
and cholesterol poisoning.
I will take action--
find where those Commies
hid my schoolbooks.
I will lose the chips
and learn my lessons.
I will and strike a blow for democracy--
just as soon as Oprah is over.

****

Elise Wylie Boucher

OH PEN, SING MY HEART

Oh pen, sing my heart
For I cannot
I can never say
The joy life is.

The sensual pleasure of sun
The seduction of wind
(Like his flesh against me
Like his fingers)
Playing across my body

My song is silent beyond my mouth
Human ears cannot hear
The power of the notes
The strength of need of passion of love
and joy and hope

I can only turn my face to
The Sun
and, warmed, intense, giving

I can but pray that
My kiss will show him
The answer to his question.

****

Kim Vollmer

WRITER'S PORTRAIT

I pump out my heart's desires
yearn to spill myself
over the top
I come flowing
to you in a word
to me in a thought
exposed to the light of my eyes I can
scribble over or darken the print
of a tall yell leaping out or the
shudder of a small soft fright.

I am me
before I wrote
and after I stop to examine
the me I want for you to know
and if I
or if you
get too involved
we could
flip the page over
and find someone new.

****

David J. Sklowdowski

BIOGRAPHIES

On these shelves
Lucy and Desi Arnaz
Are no longer together.
Although they remain separate
they lie above the works
of Beethoven and Baryshnikov.

On these shelves
Leaders of different times
Gather together
Express ideas.
Entertainment provided
by Johnny Carson and George Burns.

On these shelves
Great minds of Einstein and Curly
share thoughts.

On these shelves
Lie the biographies
of the ones
who made a difference.

****

Maria Mellinger

THIS IS THE SONG OF MY DOWNFALL

This is the song of my downfall:
There's cynicism floating in the notes
With sarcasm lyrics in little boats
And a lifeless lifecraft lost at sea
As sharks swim circles all around me.
There's a bitter hum dripping from the saxophone
Because it can't make a call
And no one's home.
There's a need for a chorus
And a new bass string.
And the horn section's waiting
For the phone to ring.
This is the song of my downfall:
I'm sorry if it's hard to dance to;
You taught me what I know,
Basic piano;
the orchestration is through--
Co-authored by you.

****

Judy Belfield

SOOTHSAYER

Mystic lipstick
colored predictions
Whore-of-Babylon Red
for the coming year--
a siren's flamelit prognostications
as bereft of shame
as the soft heart of a slug.
We woke to hear them
strumpeting our bleak bedroom,
glaringly exploding
like balloons
filled with bright blood
splattering the walls,
the sound a
volley of cannons
building to an earsplitting crescendo.
Shall I say we were startled?

****

Maria Mellinger

DANGER

Danger
In the driveway next to mine.
He returns.
She cries a denial.
Broken car windows
Let in night air
As the children
Crawl
Deep under covers;
And I,
Far away in another
Driveway
Fumble for the keys
To my door.

****

Maria Mellinger

TROUBLE

Trouble
Freezes me into geometrical cubes
That people pop into a warm drink
And take great pleasure in.
But their excitement produces heat,
And I melt,
Diluting their alcoholic pleasure,
And liquefying my
Trouble.

****

Elise Wylie Boucher

MALEVOLENCE

Oh get away from me
Angry man

You scream your bitterness
To the world
And cry in despair
"Why am I unloved?"

Oh I cannot bear to receive you.
I cannot pull your head
To my breast
And sweetly sooth your agony.
I cannot accept the cold comfort
Of your raging body...

For you hate too much.

I cannot stand against
Your wicked scowl.

****

Kris Bullmer

UNEXPECTED SUICIDE?

Spring found her hopeful;
Pondering waves that later
Washed away her life.

****

Nels Nelson

A BOMB

Surely, if all the atoms
In my body were to split,
My pain would be
Splattered onto, and shot into:
Others for miles around.
But, if by chance they were
As disappointed with the whole life scam
As I am, I believe I would be looked upon
As a mercy killer.

****

Maria Mellinger

CURL YOURSELF INTO A BALL

Curl yourself into a ball
Of quietness
But please include the sound
Of me.
I promise
Only to whisper
And hold your hand
Most silently;
And if you speak,
I will listen
Clearly.

****

Nels Nelson

DOOMED

I have this cat
Named Raspadilly.
I keep it in a fish bowl
As a symbol of cheap cartoonic irony.
Someday, I will fill the bowl
And drown my cat,
Getting revenge for
All those stupid goldfish
Which died on Saturday mornings.

****

Bob Loewe

DOES IT MATTER?

I did ponder
my ponderosity,
wondering if I was more
than a body and brain
of congealed oatmeal,
speculated whether my being
had meaning to others.
I bombasted with people
who condemn spirits
not cloning their own.
Now I ponder your eyes.
Whether I am myself,
when I'm not myself,
those depths shine at me,
and I know one person
truly likes me.

****

Amy Jo

MY LIFE FOR YOU

In stagnant dreams, I taste the fire,
and see the skull that is his face;
cutthroat grin in black tar water
his chilling touch, and frozen embrace.
Behind locked door, a single fount
of blood spews forth, death decreed,
and lonely Evil stalks his haunt,
grips my mind, and begins to feed.
So now I let out a silent scream,
shrinking inside, and slip off the latch;
I bathe my soul in gasoline,
and with opened eyes, I light the match.

****

Nels Nelson

ESCAPING

The sound of a sole church bell
Drips down my street
As I sit in the quiet of my front porch
On a fragilely cold fall night.
The crystal air threatens to shatter
To the frosted ground if I hit it
Too hard with my breath.
A stray cat finds pleasure
It plays with a drifting paper sack,
And then walks to the top of a mountain
That was never there before.

****

Nels Nelson

WHAT IS THE LONG-TERM EFFECT?

When I was seven,and played tee-ball in the town league,
I had to stop a game
To run to the bathroom.
All the parents there
Watching their children
Started to laugh.
My coach, being a prominent citizen,
Didn't let me play much afterwards,
So as to avoid embarrassment.
What was I supposed to do?

****

Kim Vollmer

COMPENSATION

I stripped my body of my better qualities
thin of them
free of them
agile, naked
I piled them at my feet
stepped up onto them
and was taller than those around me
I had deceived them, already I lacked honesty.
In time--one by one--I found qualities missing
I, gloating and completely unaware, had been robbed.
I stepped down into the sea of bobbing heads of hair,
paranoid, my self assurance was gone.
I assembled what was left of my better qualities
and began a mad stash of them--
small handfuls of character I stuffed into my
pockets, threads of kindness I brushed
into my hair, what was left of generosity and
common sense I placed under my tongue--
with responsibility and courage crammed between
my toes I plugged my ears with little
scraps of intelligence and beauty.
All that is left is deceit and insanity
which I place at the feet of the
man standing next to me
and beg him to become taller.

****

Maria Mellinger

SURVIVAL

I walked slowly to the restaurant a few blocks from my house to get a quick lunch before work. There was no foreshadowing of what was to occur--it wasn't a stormy day, I didn't look through an old yearbook that morning. But when I got to my destination, there she was.

Her name isn't important. She was one of many; so many, in fact, that I cannot remember each name exactly, only the individual taunts they used. Her face, however, will always remain somewhere in the back of my mind, laughing at me. We went to grade school together.

I can remember the first year of school, when everyone was equal. No one wanted to leave Mommy each morning and we all used the blunt-edged scissors. By the second year, the cliques had formed. I couldn't help this one when she broke her arm because that one was her best friend now. When I lost my first pair of pointed scissors, so and so couldn't loan me hers because she had other friends, too.

And so it went through the years. Best friends switched weekly and boyfriends were incorporated by the

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fourth grade. it was also in the fourth grade that my mother stopped talking to teachers and principals about the teasing I had to endure. It was time to fight my own battles. I almost flunked from the stress of it all.

In the fifth grade, my defenses naturally developed. After years of hearing "just ignore them," I decided I wouldn't just ignore them. I would enjoy them. I began to answer their insults with thank you's and various other replies. I was thrilled to read in a John Lennon biography that he was cynical and sarcastic and I worked to bring those qualities into my own life.

But that didn't stop me from crying in the girls' room, complaining to Mom, and checking my zipper each morning in the cloak room to prevent a potential disaster.

Junior high school landed me my first boyfriend, who at the time was as out of place as I was, but still helped my status. Yet daily I heard how ugly I was, what strange clothes I wore, how bad I was at God's gift to pubescence--sports. Several times I was asked when I'd start growing a chest, when I'd wash or cut my hair, and when I'd be normal. The underlying question, of course, was when would I give in. When would I finally break down and cry in front of them or attempt a fight in which I'd surely be beaten into a bloody spot on the ground. When would I let them win?

My answer was never, and I managed to get through those years with a determination to always be different and a bad fucking attitude.

Then today, suddenly, I'm thrown back into that world of lockers slammed on Nike-clad feet, ponytails pulled, and pain so heavy I thought I'd suffocate.

She was a waitress at the restaurant, and I was alone. Fear throbbed inside of me, like my arms did after practicing hitting the volleyball for hours one night, in the hopes of avoiding tomorrow's gym class onslaught. I stared at her every chance I had, but the slightest movement of her body made me look away, lest she catch me. I saw her look at me once, then turn her back.

I wondered if she remembered me. Was I so unimportant that she'd forgotten the pleasure of hurting me? Could she remember her heavy fist with the same clarity I remembered the bruise it gave me? Could she still recite those rhyming insults that were so much of a game to her?

I wondered...did she remember me?

I sure as hell remembered her. You don't forget the names, the insults, the jokes that made them superior to you. You don't forget being hit, kicked, spit upon, or even the smaller offenses of being chosen last for the volleyball game or having your books stolen from your locker. You don't forget the pain and the anger. You don't forget the faces.

What you do is grow strong. You overcome these people through survival. You may go on to be a success or you may go on into the gutter, but you go on being you, and that's what kills them. They tried to ruin you, and here you are now, the same damn person. That's when they realize they've failed. You've won.

I ate my meal in silence. She was now working the register, and I would have to pay her. I doubted she would say anything rude, but I was deathly afraid she might be nice to me--"Hey! How are you? It's been so long!" She might try to be polite; try to hide the fact that I'm an enemy.

I couldn't say anything to her. Mom told me never to start anything, but to defend myself when something happened. I usually didn't have to wait long. Back then, breakfast for those kids consisted of cold cereal and a kick in the ass. My ass.

I cautiously made my way to the cash register. My eyes darted everywhere--the empty table I left behind, the intricate pattern of my dirty shoelaces, the change in my hand--except her face. She asked the customer ahead of me how his meal was, thanked him as she took the money, then said, "Have a nice day."

I handed over my bill in silence, and put the money on the counter, watching her hands work. I don't know if she looked at me, but her fingers seemed to move unusually quick and she fumbled while opening a roll of pennies. As she slammed the register drawer she said, "Two dollars is your change." I said nothing, and she again turned her back and busied herself.

When you're a survivor, you don't have to throw your life up in their faces. Sooner or later they'll notice it on their own.

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Jerald Janes

PARTICLES

The night that we met was one of those many ventures of mine into the Bohemian reclusion of that dreary jazz bar. I sat, clove cigarette in my right hand, vodka tonic in the left, and looked to understand that by the old cuckoo clock on the all, barely visible through all this smoke, the time had reached two-forty-five a.m.

The evening had proved to be a social washout, so I took the opportunity to slip away before I felt committed to more fun with my drunken friends at the front of the bar. I liked these people only when very lonely, very late at night, and very drunk. But tonight I only sought my own bed.

One sip of the drink and I found myself stumbling for the evening's final time to the toilet.

Once inside the rancid room, I heard a Bob Marley song begin to live its four-minute life on the juke box in the barroom. My inebriated mind made a quick change to wait until until the song ended to go home.

I zipped up my zipper, pausing slowly so as not to inflict any undue injury to the center of my life's philosophy , and slipping on my own urine, emptied myself through the bathroom door directly to the floor of

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the bar.

Looking up, my eyes attempted to focus on the form of this impossibly beautiful girl, sitting at my lost table, obviously relishing in my misfortune while her very loud laughter attracted the attention of my contemporaries of vice still crouched at the front of the bar.

Quickly trying to mend my injured pride, I laughed just as loudly to attract approval for my action instead of curiosity.

I gained somewhat of an upright posture and made my ridiculous way back to my table. Reaching for my drink, I began my crusade for this girls' fancy.

"Do you come here often, Baby?" I asked, tongue in cheek. She laughed and instantly interfered with my sarcasm as she replied, "This IS the place to be seen, isn't it, Baby?"

She turned to look at the clock then returned her eyes to me to say, "Sit down, I'll get us a drink." She lifted her form and not walking but somehow simply moving, made her way to the bar. I sat in disbelief at the situation as it was unfolding in front of me.

An open invitation, completely unsolicited; maybe she was attracted to the way I can take a fall. I was not to question, but to make a swift decision to permit the evening to continue however she might wish. After all, it was getting late.

To describe her as she appeared, leaving the bar, would be futile. There was too much to say, so much could lost in the description.

She was in a word, bittersweet. It would be appropriate to say that I craved this girl, painfully. Every curve, fold, and protrusion of her body glared at me through that painted-on black dress.

Her legs were endless. Her abdomen, tight. Her breasts, full and very ripe. Her neck longed to be mouthed. Her face was torn off of a statue of godliness. Her hair was pulled back in undefinable simplicity. Her back, inviting the stresses of copulation, was strong and graceful, like a sculpture to be admired. And her butt, ass, rear end, posterior, derriere, whatever you prefer, was the most rock solid mass of flesh I had ever seen in my life.

Now it seemed as if the boys in front were very aware of her presence. Jeff took it upon himself to advance to her side. I don't know what he said, but she wasn't receptive and turned away with our drinks. Jeff continued with his assault until she turned to say, "Run off now, little boy, your friends are waiting!" Jeff returned her fire by calling her a bitch and grabbing at the elbow.

I didn't see her turn. All I saw was one of the drinks splashing on his face and then Jeff hitting the floor. I don't think she punched him. I didn't see much of anything; it was dark, I was still drunk.

She made her way back to the table and placed a blue drink in front of me.

"What is it?" I asked.

"It's called a 'Blue Fucker,' drink it and then we'll go." All I could mumble was a surprised, "Okay."

It took only two gulps to expire the concoction. She just sat there, staring at me. I was completely out of touch with my emotions. Whenever I get confused, I try to make sense by asking questions. So I attempted to ask her a question.

"What is your name?" was the first thing that I blurted out.

She quickly said, "Magda, now let's go!"

I was out of my chair before I knew it, hand in tow by my newly found companion.

"See you guys," I said as I passed by Gary on the floor, attempting to revive Jeff. Gary looked up in confusion and said, "Okay."

All the way to her car, she continued to pull me on. I felt like objecting, but who was I to rock this boat?

She unlocked my door, opened it, and found myself asking where we were going.

"To another place," she replied, her eyes overflowing with a reassuring tenderness.

"Okay," I said and sat down inside the car. I leaned over to unlock her door the second my door slammed shut, but shouted out when I found her already crawling into her seat.

"What's the matter?" Magda asked.

"Nothing," I replied. "Nothing."

She asked me to guide her to the freeway. I asked her if we were going to Chicago. "No," she replied as she reached for my hand. "We're going for a drive."

By now I was genuinely concerned. Did I take this "live for the moment" philosophy of mine a bit too far this time? But her warm hand around mine said not to worry. I don't know why--but at the time that was good enough.

She steered her Delorean onto the ramp and began to gain speed. We entered the freeway at well over ninety miles per hour. She leveled the car's speed off at one-thirty, and turned to ask if I felt fine. "Fine, just great!" I sweated out in response as the night blurred by all around me.

"I want to take you somewhere else, but I do need your consent first," she said.

I found myself staring deep into her eyes. I now realized that she was moving in and out of traffic without removing her eyes from mine.

'YOU CAN TAKE ME ANYWHERE YOU WANT!" I screamed completely disorientated and passive.

"Wonderful, wonderful! Oh, you are going to enjoy this, Wonderful!" she squealed out.

She accelerated. The car began to shake wildly. This was it, she was going to kill us both in typical artistic fashion. But then the shaking ceased. There were no more bumps, just her, the car, and I silently

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drifting along the freeway. I looked out the window to see the ground falling out from under me. I looked forward and made a quick mental search of the drugs I had ingested that evening. No, I had not taken any hallucinogens.

"Are you okay, Nicholas? Do you want to hear some music?" she asked. The last thing I can recall was her turning on the radio, me wondering how she knew my name, and then everything going black.

I looked up to see her face in front of mine, then on my side, then behind me, then sort of on top--oh--I can't describe it!

She was smiling everywhere around me. Anywhere I looked, she was there. I found myself looking everywhere at once, but nowhere in particular.

"Magda?" I cautiously asked. "What exactly is one drinking when one drinks a 'Blue Fucker'?"

"Alcohol, trust me. I've put nothing in your drink. I just permitted you to sleep when we traveled here so as not to confuse you. What you feel and sense now is very real, not chemically induced. WELCOME TO ME, NICHOLAS."

"Magda?" I asked.

"Yes?" she replied.

"TALK TO ME!!!"

She tried to calm me. "Nicholas, please don't be upset. I want you to enjoy this. I'm not going to hurt you, you're safe in me. Please, I know you are a good person and that's why I brought you here. Roam about me, enjoy yourself. If you must--you can leave right now, but you know within yourself that you can trust me, so please do."

In tide with the other events of the evening I once again gave in to her. I really did not fear anything. I just felt the occasional obligation to my pride to question her.

"Nicholas, you are within me. I'd like to come inside of you. It's very nice with you inside me. I'd like for you to feel as I do."

"Um," I scrambled for words. "Will it hurt? No, no, ignore that question. What I meant to say is, how will it feel? Give me a ball-park figure."

I actually could feel her mind acknowledge my question, understanding its intent, searching for an answer, then finally synthesizing the response.

"It will feel like it felt when your were conceived," she said.

"But Magda, I don't think I remember that far back," I said.

"Oh," she replied. "That's terrible! Oh, maybe not. It could be to your advantage."

"Okay, just do me, or whatever!" I said in utter suicidal hope. I felt her smile again. She moved closer to me from all around. She was illuminated by a brilliant white light. I felt her heat on my skin. It wasn't painful, but it was uncomfortable. I felt terribly awkward. I heard my heart beating in my ears. No--it was her heart. She was already inside of my head!

After a moment I could see the veins in my arms tightening up like rivers of sunlight with her presence filling up my body. She was coming down through my chest. I felt no emotion--just complete awareness of myself and her at the same time.

Magda continued down through my legs until my toes rejoiced in the realization that they too existed.

I felt my form begin to expand. I couldn't see any more for the light had become too intense. Magda said, "We're off!" and in an instant we were floating above the jazz bar back home.

"Can we go in?" I asked Magda.

"Of course," she replied. We descended through the roof and the two of us, or oneness of us, floated above our table. Nobody noticed.

"Can they see us?" I asked.

"Oh yes," she said, "but years ago they learned from others when they grew up how to ignore such things."

"Magda, let's go!" I said.

"Where to?" she asked.

"ANYWHERE but here," I cried.

"We could go to where I live," she suggested.

I responded with a typical, "Okay." I became instantly aware of other people all around the two of us, like how I felt when I first was in Magda. But they didn't resemble people. Instead, they resembled "Casper the Friendly Ghost"--all lit up, the whole shot.

"So, is this your home planet, Honey?" I asked.

"Well, it's where I live, if that's what you mean," she laughed. "Actually, Nicholas, we're on your planet right now. You've never been able to see us before this!"

"Okay," I questioned. "Why me?"

Magda said something that confused me for some time after that when she responded, "There is no reason. You are as I am. So we both are. This is only right. Nothing can be wrong."

After some time of floating about all of her friends, I said, "Magda, could we go all the way back? This is too much for me right now."

"Aren't you enjoying this?" she asked.

"Yes, oh it's as wonderful as you promised it to be. Really, Magda. But I'm confused and would feel better if I could get back."

We floated for a bit above the lights. I felt superior. I felt alive. I felt aware.

The two of us were alone again. I felt her motion inside of me. "What was that?" I asked.

"A tear," she said.

"NO MAGDA!!!" I screamed as I tried to hold on to her energy, draining from inside of me. I soon found myself on my apartment floor, exhausted and naked. I crawled to my couch and lay in the sunlight of the mor-

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ning sun.

The sun shone across the room and onto the floor with a brilliance I never quite noticed before. One single beam of sunlight punched into my world like no other had done before.

Looking into the beam, I saw particles of dust floating about each other, some entering, some leaving the beam, but all at random about each other. I felt a tear welling up inside of my eye.

The doorbell rang. Wrapping the afghan around my figure, I proceeded to the door.

I turned the handle and opened the door. Outside my door I found a complete bath of light, consuming everything about. Out of the light walked the girl that I craved so last night at the bar.

"MY PLACE OR YOURS, YOU MAKE THE DECISION," Magda said with that encompassing smile.

I took Magda by the hand and led her out the door, the two of us entering the light.

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John Schmitz

A WAKE

Five to nine show and tell.
Spilling guts and moping,
Groping for the right words.
You should be sorry!
Get away. Can't you read my eyes?
DON'T TOUCH me, but especially him.
"Let us pray" for whom did you say?

Step outside from the stench of rotten webs,
Sick serpent tongues and cracked lips.
sprawl out on the concrete bench,
The second ring of a morbid circus.
They tell each other how hard I'm taking it.
Staring.
How 'bout a peanut? I'll do a dance for a peanut.
One lousy marshmallow and me and my stiff twin will
entertain.

Out back,
The top pops
And a body drops to the horror of its bearers.
A well-dressed, caked-up, rubber grotesque thing--
Misshapen heap in a puddle of rainwater and worms.
Looks like him, but it ain't him--
A truth only I have the privilege of seeing.
In the midst of fainting and shock,
I say, "Bury it!" It stinks. I'm leaving.
This place doesn't deserve my mourning,
And neither does that thing.

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Elise Wylie Boucher

LIGHT IS FADING

Light is fading
I am walking up the hill
Towards the darkening horizon

A silhouette appears
Figure of a man
Proud against the sky
Young strong tall--you

Clouds rushing in the dying blue
Faster than any wind
But you stand still
Untouched

I fall to my knees
Bleeding
Cry your name
A supplication

My hand extends
My blood becomes precious stones
As it touches the ground
More valuable than diamonds

You stand still
Unmoved

Not even wanting the treasure
I die to give you

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Amy Jo

THE END

from the city of gold, across this land
I'm searching for myself
changes pass by, while I sleep
when the sun crawls across the sky
simply to vanish at the end of day
it only makes me wonder why--
the might stares back at me
while the wolf cries to the moon
I dream of a beginning to this end
and it's funny how it seems
I'm drifting away from the world.

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Wordeater #68